

# Action

1903 | Lowell Lectures on Some Topics of Logic Bearing on Questions Now Vexed. Part 1 of 3rd draught of 3rd Lecture | CP 1.324

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[There is a category] which the rough and tumble of life renders most familiarly prominent. We are continually bumping up against hard fact. We expected one thing, or passively took it for granted, and had the image of it in our minds, but experience forces that idea into the background, and compels us to think quite differently. You get this kind of consciousness in some approach to purity when you put your shoulder against a door and try to force it open. You have a sense of resistance and at the same time a sense of effort. There can be no resistance without effort; there can be no effort without resistance. They are only two ways of describing the same experience. It is a double consciousness. We become aware of ourself in becoming aware of the not self. The waking state is a consciousness of reaction; and as the consciousness *itself* is two sided, so it has also two varieties; namely, action, where our modification of other things is more prominent than their reaction on us, and perception, where their effect on us is overwhelmingly greater than our effect on them.

1903 | Syllabus: Syllabus of a course of Lectures at the Lowell Institute beginning 1903, Nov. 23. On Some Topics of Logic | EP 2:272

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In the ideas of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness, the three elements, or *Universal Categories*, appear under their forms of Firstness. They appear under their forms of Secondness in the ideas of Facts of Firstness, or *Qualia*, Facts of Secondness, or Relations, and Facts of Thirdness, or Signs; and under their forms of Thirdness in the ideas of Signs of Firstness, or Feeling, i.e., things of beauty; Signs of Secondness, or Action, i.e., modes of conduct; and Signs of Thirdness, or Thought, i.e., forms of thought.

1906 | Prolegomena to an Apology for Pragmatism | CP 4.542

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That conception of Aristotle which is embodied for us in the cognate origin of the terms *actuality* and *activity* is one of the most deeply illuminating products of Greek thinking. Activity implies a generalization of *effort*; and effort is a two-sided idea, effort and resistance being inseparable, and therefore the idea of Actuality has also a dyadic form.

1906 | The Basis of Pragmatism | EP 2:383

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One of the most useful and at the same time one of the most arduous of the labors of cenoscopy consists in starting with a familiar but vague concept and searching out and defining the nearest definite concept of sufficient breadth for the purposes of metaphysics. Treating in this way the concept

of *action*, and at the same time generalizing it so as not to confine it to temporal conditions, we get a concept which may very well be named action in the philosophical sense. It will be defined as a surd dyadic relation by which one correlate, the *patient*, receives a special determination, while the other correlate, the *agent*, receives *thereby*, or perhaps we should say *therein*, no special determination. The determination is *special* in the sense that in default of the relation the patient would not have been so determined. Thus, the completing of *B* by *A* is an action in the philosophical sense, in which *A* [is] the agent and *B* the patient. Duality consists in such action of *A* upon *B* together with a reciprocal action of the same completing nature of *B* upon *A*.

The double relation of equiparance which constitutes duality is surd. It may be described in words, but those words can only be understood by means of reference to certain experiences; just as a person may be told that a piece of textile fabric is a yard wide, yet can never know what is meant except through an experience immediate or mediate of a certain bar laid up in the Westminster palace. The experiences [that] acquaint us with action are of two varieties, experiences of active effort and experiences of passive surprise.

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1907 | Pragmatism | 5.472

Let me remind you of the distinction ... between dynamical, or dyadic, action; and intelligent, or triadic action. An event, *A*, may, by brute force, produce an event, *B*; and then the event, *B*, may in its turn produce a third event, *C*. The fact that the event, *C*, is about to be produced by *B* has no influence at all upon the production of *B* by *A*. It is impossible that it should, since the action of *B* in producing *C* is a contingent future event at the time *B* is produced. Such is dyadic action, which is so called because each step of it concerns a pair of objects.

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1913 | An Essay toward Improving Our Reasoning in Security and in Uberty | EP 2:464

... while action may, in the first place, be purely physical and open to outward inspection, it may also, in the second place, be purely mental and knowable (by others, at any rate, than the actor) only through outward symptoms or indirect effects, and thirdly it may be partly inward and partly outward, as when a person talks, involving some expenditure of potential energy ...